

Testimony before the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee re: SJR 10

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Good afternoon Chair Burdick and members of the Committee. I'm Betty Reynolds, and serve on the Oregon School Boards Association's Legislative Policy Committee, and the West Linn Wilsonville School Board.

I'm here to testify in support of SJR 10, and want to thank you very much for the work you're doing to help address revenue shortfalls faced by School Districts.

First, some good news: the West Linn Wilsonville School District has much to be proud of.

- The State's 2011-12 Report Card rated 10 of 12 District schools as "outstanding," and each the District's primary schools was "outstanding."
- This year, both West Linn and Wilsonville High Schools were on the Advanced Placement Honor Roll; only two Districts statewide achieved that honor.
- Our 4 year graduation rate is among the highest in the state, at nearly 89%

The District enjoys tremendous community support dedicated to student achievement: teachers and staff agreed to forego salary increases these past two years so that instructional days could be restored; a dedicated, all volunteer Education Foundation has raised over \$300,000 in the past two years to preserve teaching positions; and District voters value quality education so highly that they passed a \$98M capital bond measure in 2008, and have passed three local option levies.

The bad news is that potential local option revenue is being lost to compression. For 2012-13, 33% of all taxable property in the District is fully compressed. The attached graph shows the decline very dramatically. Our Local Option tax collections peaked in 2008-09, at \$7.7 million. Since then, we have lost over \$13 million from that peak, which would have supported about 44 teachers per year. That is equal to 10 percent of our licensed teaching staff.

The revenue losses are taking their toll.

- Although our graduation rates are among the highest in the state, the graduation rate dropped slightly last year from the previous year.
- One of the previously "outstanding" schools is now "satisfactory."
- The 2010-11 budget included 15 furlough days.
- Although instructional days have been restored, class sizes are up. For example, primary class sizes had been in the 20s, and some are now in the 30s.

The voters of our district have consistently voted by large margins to support smaller class sizes, but that wonderful community support is losing out to compression. If a local community chooses to raise money for its schools, we would hope they could realize the full value of that levy. For the sake of our students, we urge you to approve this measure, which could dramatically improve school funding in districts across Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

West Linn-Wilsonville School District
Local Option Tax History

West Linn-Wilsonville School District

